"THE THUNDER OF JEREMIAH JONES"

By

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FADE IN

1. EXT. A COLONIAL VIRGINIA STREET. DAY

It is Sunday morning and the town is filling with people preparing for church. Several arrive in wagons and carriages and others on foot. It is also a time for people to greet one another again and to exchange news.

A horseman goes by slowly, dressed in his church going clothes.

2. ANOTHER ANGLE

bringing the church into view at the end of the street. Near us, several people are clustered at a public announcement board, reading the news. The horseman, William Jones by name, a lean, quiet man in his early forties, reins in his horse and dismounts to join the group at the announcement board.

3. THE BOARD

A newspaper, RICHMOND TIMES, is posted and its bold type headline reads:

PATRICK HENRY
SPEECH TO
CONVENTION

Declares Virginia Must
Join In Liberation

4. JONES

as he studies the speech, Norris Rigby, a man of similar age, joins him.

RIGBY

It's a convention of madmen, Mr Jones.
And traitors to the bargain.

He looks at Jones.

RIGBY
(cont)
I trust that's your opinion as well.

JONES

I'm not a political man, Mr Rigby.

A troop of horses is heard approaching o.c.

4. CONT:

RIGBY

In these days, my friend? You're a rare man, indeed.

5. MED SHOT

catches a troop of British cavalrymen riding through town. Major Dudley, adept and thirty, is at the head. Camera picks up the faces of the townspeople as the troop rides through. Some of the Americans show open hostility, some remain impssive. A few, such as Mr Rigby, remove their hats as a sign of respect. But the troop has brought a sudden, tense silence.

6. EXT. THE CHURCH

as Dudley and his men ride by, on their way out of town, the minister is opening the doors.

7. INT. CHURCH FOYER

as the minister places his bible down on a chair and climbs to the alcove where the rope for the church bell hangs.

8. THE ALCOVE

The minister reaches for the rope and gathers his strength for the pull. He yanks..but nothing happens. Puzzled, he pulls again and still there is no sound. He looks up..confused.

Rigby enters with some people, Jones just behind. Rigby sees the minister having difficulty.

RIGBY

What's the trouble?

MINISTER

The bell. I can't seem to move it.

9. BELL TOWER STAIRS

looking down at the minister who now appears at the foot and proceeds up to us. As he looks at the belfry, he stops in shock.

10. POV-MINISTER

The bell is gone..its cut ropes instead tied to a beam.

11. RIGBY

is stunned..and very angry.

RIGBY

It's the rebels who've taken it.
Stolen it to use for guns.

SMASH CUT TO

11A. INT. THE JONES FOUNDRY
CU-THE CHURCH BELL

As we pan up, we see that the bell is on a small platform that is being cranked slowly forward toward an open, roaring oven. Jeremiah Jones is at the crank handle. Intent on his task, he seems almost manly but his face betrays him as a youth of no more than sixteen. Richard, a boy of the same age, is equally intent on the action as he wields an iron rod, to keep the oven door ajar.

The thematic music of the film hits and the title now super over the following action.

Camera looks at Jeremiah's face, intense and absorbed. What we can see of the room now in this brief moment, reveals it to be of moderate size. There is moulding equipment, a beehive brick oven and a chimney work.

We move with the bell..as it comes closer and closer to the flames. And as it slides into the oven and the flames envelop it...we..

FADE OUT

END TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN

12. EXT. A COUNTRY ROAD. DAY

The countryside is rich and green but we have only a moment to look at it as we hear a horse galloping wildly. Seconds later, the horseman appears around a bend and we see it is Jones.

13. TRAVELING SHOT

Anxiety seems to propel him.

14. EXT. THE YARD BEFORE HIS HOUSE AND FOUNDRY. DAY

We see Jones hurrying up. He stops and dismounts quickly.

JONES

Jeremiah!

There is no reply. He moves swiftly across the yard to the foundry.

15. INT. FOUNDRY

as he hurries in. The room is empty. Jones glances around. Now he crosses to the oven and pulls open the door. He pokes around ..finds some embers. He looks about again..then goes to the tools. They are all in their proper places. He lifts up a ladle..examines it..and picks some raised metal off with his finger. He studies it carefully.

JEREMIAH (o.c.)

Hope the church was crowded.

16. NEW ANGLE

as Jones turns to see Jeremiah entering.

JEREMIAH
(cont)
The Reverend counts heads like a school master.

Jeremiah goes past him, avoiding his father's face. He glances into the oven and shuts the door.

JEREMIAH
(cont)
I cast those plates Mrs Newcome wanted.

JONES

With <u>bronze</u>?

16. CONT:

Jeremiah stiffens for a moment, his back still to his father but now he turns.

JONES

Lies between us? Is that the way it's to be now?

Jeremiah comes to him.

JEREMIAH

I'm sorry, Father. But you'd only have stopped me.

JONES

And you think the tories won't? They've discovered the bell's gone and it's not a child's prank in their eyes. They know it's to be melted down for weapons and where are they to come but here? Oh, Jeremiah..how foolish.

JEREMIAH

It's all done. There's nothing they can find.

JONES

What have you done with the metal?

JEREMIAH

It's safe enough. Hidden in the woods where only Richard and I know.

JONES

And that's where it's to stay.

Jeremiah hesitates then...

JEREMIAH

It can't. I'm going to recast it. And there's no time for me to wait.

JONES

You've listened to too many drummer boys.. And the sound is so loud, you don't hear the truth.

16. CONT:

JEREMIAH

The war's begun. That's all I have to know.

JONES

It's not a war for boys.

JEREMIAH

Every day it's someone else who's gone. Last week it was Thomas Pryor and after that his brother too. Monday I saw Will Newman and he was going north to Pennsylvania and General Washington.

JONES

There's plenty more that's staying. The colony's split three waysdown the middle. There're tories and rebels and those who don't care which side wins.

JEREMIAH

Well, I care. We just can't keep hiding away.

JONES

You think that's a lesson that needs teaching? Least of all...<u>for me</u>?

The father's sudden explosion of anger stills the boy's own. He turns away.

JEREMIAH

My friends are going and they're not having to run from their families to do it.

JONES

They're different than us. If you go, there <u>is</u> no family.

17. REVERSE ANGLE

looking across the boy at his father as Jones comes up to him, softening for a moment..needing to explain his refusal.

CONT

17. CONT:

JONES

You're not going to make me feel ashamed, son. No way you can do that. I know what it cost me to come here and I know what it cost to let me stay. There's nobody I can't face.

JEREMIAH

I don't care what they say. It's what I feel.

JONES

I know that. And still, I'm asking you not to go. Can you ask yourself why?

CONT

18. MED CLOSE

as the boy turns back to him.

JEREMIAH

I can't stay.

JONES

I lost your mother to what we built here. I don't want to lose you.

JEREMIAH

But sixteen isn't a boy anymore. Not the way you think of me.

JONES

You are a boy. They're fighting about this rebel idea in every county seat from here up to Canada. But you understand it better than all of them, don't you. You talk like war is some sort of game. There are men dying and the way things are going . . . the others are more dead than alive.

JEREMIAH

Because they need us. They need help.

The sound of a carriage begins to intrude.

JEREMIAH
(cont)

Well, I'm not going to just sit here anymore. I took that bell and I melted it down. But it's not going to be for just any ordinary gun. I'm going to forge a cannon. An officer showed me plans. I know how . . . and I can do it.

From the sound of the carriage, it has come into the yard. Jones has been so disturbed by what Jeremiah's been saying that he only now hears the carriage.

JONES

You don't even hear what you're saying. A cannon. Why not a warship while you're at it.

He hurries to the window.

19. THE YARD

Rigby is alighting from his carriage.

20. JONES

turns away from the window.

JONES

I told you they'd come here. It's Mr Rigby. If he finds it was you...

He hurries to the door.

21. THE YARD

as Rigby comes up to the door and finds Jones coming out.The latter keeps himself between Rigby and the door. Rigby nods curtly.

RIGBY

Missed you at services, Mr Jones. You left in something of a hurry.

JONES

Come Sunday, you always talk like a deacon. Just thought I'd put in an appearance, then go on about my business.

Rigby is staring up at something and Jones turns to follow his gaze.

22. POV

panning up to the chimney over the foundry. There is no smoke issuing.

23. TWO SHOT

as Rigby turns back to Jones.

JONES

We don't offend with work on the Sabbath.

RIGBY

There are other offenses, Mr. Jones. You know the bell's been taken.

As Jones seems about to indicate surprise...

CONT

23. CONT:

RIGBY

You seem surprised.

JONES

Just that you've come all the way
out here to tell me what I saw for myself.

RIGBY

I came for more than that, sir.
Could we go inside?

JONES

Didn't mean to forget my manners.
Some nice hot tea wouldn't go badly.

He starts toward the house, leaving the foundry door unguarded and expecting Rigby to follow but the latter hesitates for a moment then moves quickly to the foundry. Jones looks back and sees.

JONES

Rigby!

But Rigby is entering the foundry.

24. INT. FOUNDRY

as Rigby enters. Jeremiah is stoking coke into the oven. The boy turns as Rigby's glance swiftly takes in the room. Jones enters...angrily.

JONES

There's nothing here that concerns
you.

RIGBY

Then why were you so anxious to keep me
out.

He looks at the oven.

RIGBY
(cont)
That oven's been used today.
(to Jeremiah)
What have you done in there?

24. CONT:

Jones moves forward.

JONES

If its brass candlesticks you want, then we can give you a pair. There'll be ready by the morning.

RIGBY

And what was it you were working on, Jeremiah? Could it have been the church bell that's now been melted down.

Jeremiah stares at him, unflinching.

JONES

Rigby..

RIGBY

Let the boy answer for himself....if he can.

Rigby is challenging him. Jones looks at Jeremiah then nods.

JEREMIAH

There's been no bell here, Mr Rigby.

RIGBY

Your father says he's not a political man. But it's not that way with you, is it? You're a man of revolution, aren't you?

JONES

He's told you what you came to know.

RIGBY

Do you think me unreasonable to have come here? Who else could have stolen that bell unless it were someone who knows weights and pulleys and how to move heavy metals about. And who else can take eighty pounds of bronze and turn it into weapons? Was that so stupid of me, sir?